

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 10199

LIMDIS

E.9. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MX, CI

SUBJECT: THE BREAK WITH CHILE: CAUSES AND PORTENTS

REF: STATE 265459; MEXICO 9997; MEXICO 10032

1. EFFORTS THUS FAR BY POLITICAL OBSERVERS, MEXICAN AND FOREIGN, GOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE, TO FATHOM THE REASONS FOR MEXICO'S SUDDEN DECISION TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH CHILE HAVE NOT BEEN NOTABLY SUCCESSFUL. AS REPORTED (MEXICO 10032), FOREIGN SECRETARY RABASA'S "EXPLANATION" OF THE BREAK LEFT AS MANY QUESTIONS UNANSWERED AS RESOLVED AND FONSEC OFFICIALS WHO MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO KNOW ALL THE FACTS ARE ADAMANT IN THEIR REFUSAL TO COMMENT MEANINGFULLY ON THE SUBJECT, BEYOND REFERRING TO THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT.

2. A USUALLY WELL-INFORMED CONTACT WITHIN THE CANADIAN EMBASSY WITH MANY CONTACTS IN GOM AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS EXPRESS CONTINUING CONFUSION AND PUZZLEMENT IN AN INTERVIEW (AT HER REQUEST) WITH AN EMBOFF ON DEC. 3. SHE RELATED THAT CANADIAN AMBASSADOR, ASKING FONSEC UNDER-SECRETARY GALLASTEGUI FOR INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT ON THE EVENING OF THE BREAK (NOV. 26) WAS TURNED AWAY WITH A "NO COMMENT" (SIMILAR TO GALLASTEGUI'S RESPONSE TO US
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POL COUNSELOR AS REPORTED MEXICO 9997). RABASA LATER TOLD

CANADIANS THERE WAS NO "HIDDEN REASON" FOR THE BREAK, THAT HE HAD GIVEN THE TRUE AND COMPLETE EXPLANATION IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE. THE CANADIAN EMBOFF, HOWEVER, FOUND GOM EXPLANATIONS LESS THAN CONVINCING AND CITED COMMENTS OF DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS EXPRESSING BEWILDERMENT. (THIS HAS ALSO BEEN OUR EXPERIENCE. POL COUNSELOR WAS EVEN APPROACHED AT RECEPTION BY PRC EMBOFF, NOT USUALLY TOO FORTHCOMING WITH US OFFICIALS, WITH PUZZLED AND DETAILED QUESTIONS ON BREAK WITH CHILE.)

3. DESPITE BOMBSHELL QUALITY OF GOM'S SUDDEN ACTION AND DESPITE CONTINUING LACK OF A STRAIGHTFORWARD, COMPLETE AND FULLY CREDIBLE EXPLANATION BY MEXICO, A GOOD MANY OBSERVERS ARE COMING TO BELIEVE THAT A COMBINATION OF DEVELOPMENTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, RATHER THAN AN UNDISCLOSED SINGLE EVENT, LED TO THE BREAK. BASIC TO THE GOM ACTION, OF COURSE, WAS THE STRONG ANTIPATHY WHICH PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AND HIS ADMINISTRATION HAVE FELT TOWARD THE GOC SINCE THE FALL OF ALLENDE IN 1973. BUT FACTORS WHICH MANY RELATE TO THE GOM'S DECISION TO BREAK RELATIONS AT THIS TIME INCLUDE THE OUTCOME OF THE RECENT MFM IN QUITO, THE US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT INTERVIEW WITH CIA DIRECTOR COLBY, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA'S INITIATIVES (TO WHICH HE MAY HAVE FELT INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES' RESPONSE UNSATISFACTORY) AT THE WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE IN ROME, AND THE STILL UNCERTAIN FATE OF ECHEVERRIA'S LONG-NURSED CHARTER OF ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF STATES (CERD) IN THE CURRENT UNGA. THE MIX OF THESE FACTORS, IN WHATEVER PROPORTION, AND OTHERS WHICH MAY REMAIN UNKNOWN, SEEMS TO HAVE LED TO MEXICO'S SUDDEN DECISION, UNDOUBTEDLY TAKEN AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, AND MAY HAVE SIGNIFICANT PORTENTS FOR THE FUTURE, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO US-MEXICAN RELATIONS.

4. ONE CLEAR SIGNAL INHERENT IN THE GOM ACTION ALMOST CERTAINLY RELATES TO THE RESULTS OF THE MFM ON CUBA IN QUITO LAST MONTH, AND WE SUSPECT THAT THE MAJOR INTENDED RECIPIENT OF THAT SIGNAL IS THE USG. FEW HEMISPHERIC STATES HAVE A MORE CONSISTENT RECORD THAN MEXICO OF EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF HEMISPHERIC UNITY, AND AGAINST EXCLUDING

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MEMBERS OF THE HEMISPHERIC FAMILY. MEXICO'S MAINTENANCE OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA WHEN ALL OTHER OAS MEMBERS BROKE RELATIONS IS A PART OF THAT RECORD. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA PERSONALLY WAS DEEPLY CHAGRINED OVER THE RESULTS OF THE QUITO MEETING, THOUGH HIS PUBLIC COMMENTS WERE RELATIVELY MILD ("DOES THE OAS STILL EXIST?") HE MAY WELL HAVE REASONED THAT IF THE US AND A MINORITY OF OTHER OAS MEMBERS ARE UNWILLING TO

TAKE STEPS TOWARD THE REINTEGRATION OF CUBA WITHIN THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMUNITY, WHY SHOULD MEXICO CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY --CHILE-- WHOSE GOVERNMENT MEXICO ABHORS? AND HE PROBABLY FELT THAT THE USG WOULD REGRET MEXICO'S BREAK WITH CHILE.

5. MEXICAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN SENSITIVE TO THE VIEWS OF THE DOMESTIC LEFT, NOT LEAST BECAUSE THE OFFICIAL PARTY (PRI) FINDS IT HARD TO ADMIT THAT ANY POLITICAL GROUPING CAN REALLY BE TO THE LEFT OF THE "INSTITUTIONALIZED" REVOLUTION. IT WAS ALL TOO EASY FOR THE GOM'S DOMESTIC CRITICS (PARTICULARLY OF THE LEFT) TO RELATE MEXICO'S SUPREME CREED IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS --NON-INTERVENTION-- TO THE CHILEAN CASE AND TO DRAW PARALLELS BETWEEN THAT CASE AND MEXICO'S HISTORIC, IF SOMEWHAT QUIXOTIC, REFUSAL TO MAINTAIN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN. STATEMENTS BY HIGH-RANKING US OFFICIALS ARE TAKEN IN MEXICAN CIRCLES AS PROOF POSITIVE NOT ONLY THAT THE USG AND US CORPORATIONS DIRECTLY INTERVENED IN CHILE'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND BROUGHT ABOUT ALLENDE'S DOWNFALL BUT ALSO THAT THE USG CONTINUES TO ASSERT THE "RIGHT" TO INTERVENE IN OTHER COUNTRIES. ACCORDINGLY, THE INTERVIEW IN US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT CITED ABOVE, AS INTERPRETED IN MEXICO, COULD NOT BE IGNORED BY THE GOM (OR SO ECHEVERRIA MAY HAVE FELT) WITHOUT INCREASING THE GOVERNMENT'S VULNERABILITY TO CRITICISM. THUS, WHILE IT IS CLEAR THAT THE INTERVIEW DID NOT CAUSE THE BREAK WITH CHILE, IT MAY HAVE BEEN A SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT IN TRIGGERING THE SUDDEN DECISION TO BREAK. STATE 265459 SUGGESTS THAT THE GOM DECISION WAS TAKEN IN THE PERIOD NOVEMBER 23-26 WHICH WOULD COINCIDE WITH THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION IN MEXICO ON THE COLBY INTERVIEW AS WELL AS

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THE STRONG ATTACK ON OUTSIDE INTERVENTION BY SENATOR CARILLO IN THE MEXICAN SENATE.

6. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE SUBJECT ACTION BY THE GOM, NOT PERHAPS EARTHSHAKING IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS, MAY BE OF SIGNIFICANCE IN SIGNALING SOMETHING OF A TURNING POINT IN MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY UNDER ECHEVERRIA. IT IS TOO SOON TO MEASURE THE SHARPNESS OF THE TURN, THE MAGNITUDE OF POSSIBLE CHANGES, OR THE IMPACT THIS MAY HAVE ON US-MEXICAN RELATIONS. AMONG THE POSSIBLE AND EVEN LIKELY TRENDS OR EVENTS WHICH MAY FLOW FROM THE TOTALITY OF RECENT EVENTS -- THE QUITO MFM, THE BREAK WITH CHILE, ECHEVERRIA'S TRIP TO ROME, THE UNGA ACTION ON CERDS -- ARE THE FOLLOWING. MEXICO MAY STEP UP INITIATIVES TO FORM A LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION EXCLUDING

THE US AND MAY ALSO INCREASE EFFORTS, IN INTERNATIONAL FORA, TO STIMULATE LATIN AMERICAN CAUCUSES EXCLUDING THE US. MEXICO MAY MOVE CLOSER TO NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES AND MAY PLAY A LESS ACTIVE -- IF NOT OBSTRUCTIONIST -- ROLE IN THE OAS, WHICH ECHEVERRIA HAS CALLED MORIBUND AND FROM WHICH RABASE WAS HINTED AT WITHDRAWAL. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE AT THIS TIME TO EVALUATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE POSSIBLE CHANGE IN POLICY AND ATTITUDES MAY INFLUENCE MEXICO'S POSITION ON AND AT THE SCHEDULED MEETING OF HEMISPHERIC FOREIGN MINISTERS IN BUENOS AIRES NEXT YEAR. FINALLY, THERE MAY BE SOME NOTICEABLE INCREASE IN MEXICAN-CUBAN EXCHANGES OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER ; THERE HAVE BEEN MANY RUMORS IN RECENT DAYS THAT ECHEVERRIA WOULD MAKE HIS LONG-HERALDED VISIT TO CUBA NEXT JANUARY.
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